



# ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIC VISION 2025 FOR ECO

## **RESTO – Alternative Strategic Vision for 2025 for ECO**

Briefing Paper  
March 2017

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#### ABOUT COMMANDELEVEN

CommandEleven is a research organization focused on Pakistan’s national security aspects and enhancing global understanding and collaboration opportunities for the nation.

Founded in 2015, CommandEleven provides situational awareness to facilitate a better understanding of the key dynamics that effect Pakistan from a national security perspective, especially in relation to terrorism, insurgencies and extremism.

CommandEleven seeks to inform and guide public policy and decision makers in government, business and military through a rigorous program of publications, conferences, digital medias, policy briefings and recommendations.

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## PREFACE

Let us admit it for once that the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is nothing more than an international club of Muslim states which has very limited success to its name for over a generational period.

If we compare its performance to similar multinational structures, like the ASEAN, we clearly see that ECO is badly failed at delivering its objectives, if not completely failed already. Yes, we have all heard about the lofty goals of the ECO Vision 2025, the smiles given away for photographers, the lengthy and warm handshakes and how everything is going to be just fine, because ECO is somehow going to pull a miraculous rabbit out of the geopolitical hat, which it has failed to do for the past 32 years. The problem is not with the ECO itself, which was created with sincere intentions in mind and does represent the strong relations of the regional member states.

The problem, in our assessment, is that the ECO suffers from a chronically limited scope and the gutsy strategic analysis of the current and dire challenges facing the member states, which should have formed the basis of the ECO's Vision 2025.

Today, we are presenting our own version of the Vision 2025 because the current 'vision,' if we can really call it that, is not only short legged but also mediocre and simply irrelevant to the fast-changing regional geopolitical weather forecast.

## THE BIG IDEA

In order to truly understand this 'big idea,' you must understand the genesis of multi-national cooperation outfits in its true spirit. They have only one objective – to solve problems together through multilateral cooperation which countries can't solve on their own due to their limited 'National Power Index'. Such multi-national cooperation can be economic, military, strategic, political or all of them at once. The philosophy of such organizational structures is rooted deep inside the mutual challenges faced by the member states of a particular organization at any given time. The organization, therefore, is equipped accordingly with the right tools and powers to deliver the inter-governmental goals in an equitable and fair manner, which is acceptable to all members, where ECO has failed.

Let's also look at the maps of the member states of ECO and try to understand what their most serious challenge is in 2017. In our analysis, the economy is definitely a major challenge but their most serious challenge is security. Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan are engaged in a conflict one way or another – internally, externally, or in some cases both. Azerbaijan is engaged in a dispute with Armenia and the other Central Asian member states are growing increasingly wary of the increasing Russian influence in their periphery. There is the massive challenge of terrorism which threatens the sustainability of every member state involved.

If ECO truly represents the core interests of the member states, then it should not only represent the economic interests, but also their legitimate security and diplomatic interests.

Therefore, we are presenting an idea to morph ECO into the Regional Economic and Security Treaty Organization (RESTO), just as ECO succeeded the RCD.

The idea of RESTO is to restructure ECO by including core elements of regional state interests like defense, security and diplomacy into its organizational vision 2025, thereby, enabling the organization to function across the vast spectrum of the geopolitical chessboard, which threatens the collective interests of the regional states.

The RESTO will not be created to 'rest in peace' like the ECO is currently doing. This organization would become the driving force for regional integration, free trade, economic synergy, freedom of movement, borderless travel and, most importantly, protecting the member states from all conventional, non-conventional and even nuclear threats.

The major objectives are listed below.

## ECONOMICS

RESTO will be tasked with implementing an ambitious economic project inside the member states from creation of an infrastructure investment bank to provide for the regional connectivity projects, and to provide financing for industrializing the member states, implementing free, preferential trade among the member states. This structure will

ensure food security for the member states investing in industrial scale agriculture, meat and dairy infrastructure to protect the region from a looming food crisis, droughts and other crisis situations. RESTO will prioritize energy supply from its member states to its member states to ensure energy security on competitive rates.

This includes oil and gas pipelines to provide for domestic and industrial use. RESTO will also be tasked with creating a regional Nuclear Research Agency to generate clean and sustainable nuclear energy and internally trade nuclear fuel for civilian use, under IAEA safeguards, irrespective of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The organization will be tasked with implementing uniformed industrial codes of practices and quality controls by creating a standardizing quality control and OHSE agency.

## **INTEGRATION**

RESTO shall have the authority and resources to construct a strategic ground line of communication infrastructure, including fast mobility highways and trains, which would be designed to connect entire land locked regions for both civilian and trade transport to and from ports in Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. This organization will be empowered to turn the “wild goose projects,” like the ‘Gul Train Project,’ into a reality rather than a mere ink on paper. The entire region should be connected with air-transport, freedom of overhead flights and landing rights should be provided to airlines for both civilian and freight transport on a regular basis.

Once the free, preferential trade agreements are in place, the transport of perishable goods using transport aircrafts will become commonplace. RESTO shall be empowered to implement visa-free travel for the citizens, similar to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), of the member states between the member states to bolster people to people relations, reinvent ancient cultural, religious, and linguistic links, increasing tourism and micro industries and investments, which would be a wholesome game for the entire region.

In the long term, the cultural integration under RESTO will pay off as cultural cohesion will pave way for much deeper block approach to be adopted in another decade, modeled after the European Union.

## **DEFENSE**

RESTO must be designed to protect full spectrum sovereignty of its member states from internal separatism, terrorism, foreign aggression, and nuclear and biological threats. The defense element of RESTO would see total standardization of the military elements of the member states over time, including training, communication, command and control, technology, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, under the ‘Full Spectrum Deterrence’ doctrine as adopted by Pakistan. This element would see the creation of unified military command like the North Atlantic Treaty organization (NATO), which would calculate both symmetric and asymmetric threats and challenges faced by the member states.

This military alliance would defend member states against foreign invasion on any pretext which may threaten the territorial sovereignty of the member state. A new inter-state

intelligence sharing agency shall be enacted to streamline the intelligence gathering, processing and operations from all member states to maintain optimum national and regional security. The structure would also include a law enforcement agency, which would be able to operate in all member states, to arrest high profile criminals involved in regional narcotics, human smuggling and terrorism.

The silent features of such an arrangement are given below in bullet points.

A joint military and defense doctrine to be set up under the Full Spectrum Deterrence agenda to safeguard the national security to member states.

A joint training system will be put in place to train all soldiers, pilots, and support staff under a single training regime to develop the capabilities to communicate and fight together, while being able to deploy their weapon systems under a uniformed doctrine, so everyone possesses the same capabilities to operate together in the battlefield.

A joint military and intelligence command center to be set-up with rotating commands between the most competent and sound general officers of the member states. Each state should nominate their candidate for tenure of 3 years. It should include sea, aerospace, cyber and ground warfare commands.

A region-wide counter-terrorism (CT) task force would be established, which has the capability to mobilize rapidly to respond to crisis situations.

A joint military industrial complex setup to standardize the production of military equipment for the allied forces in ground, air, and sea domain. The military industries of all member states will be made part of a joint research and development structure and they will be given a share of contracts for military hardware production. The allied states would buy 100% of the equipment from fellow member states within a decade.

RESTO will conduct regular military exercises, involving all dimensions, to ensure readiness and inter-operability between the forces. Joint military bases will be constructed anywhere the defensive doctrine dictates.

Member states will share their excess military equipment with other member states, unable to purchase individually, but have a tangible requirement to have them deployed.

RESTO will create a highly sophisticated multi-layered ballistic missile defense system (BMDS), including long range radars and multiple short, medium, long-range interceptor missiles, and high direct energy weapons to protect the member states from the threat of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) attack. The organization also requires a triad nuclear umbrella to ensure retaliation if an enemy chooses to target a member state with nuclear weapons.

RESTO will provide peace-keeping missions in conflict hit areas of its member states, in order to maintain optimum security and sovereignty.

## **DIPLOMACY**

RESTO will provide robust diplomatic support to its member states at international forums, like the United Nations (UN), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and European Union (EU), as well as defending countries from international sanctions by gaining permanent membership for one of its member states, at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The power to veto decisions, which may threaten the mutual economic and security interests of RESTO, comes as a diplomatic tool to ensure its strategic viability.

Defending its membership from the threat of international sanctions may also include abstaining to abide by such sanctions, because one or more member states under foreign sanctions, threatening the interests of RESTO, and countered by increasing regional trade to bypass such punitive measures, often applied by western powers in the service of their hegemonic ambitions. The organization will also deter other regional giants, like Russia and China, from gaining unbalanced geopolitical and diplomatic influence over the region, which may be unhealthy for the interests of RESTO member states. This organization would aggressively project the interests of its member states on regional forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

## **STREAM**

RESTO will be tasked with creating a uniformed education system by creating an inter-governmental agency to standardize curriculum for primary, secondary and higher education. The standard education system would be built around the 'Science, Technology and Robotics, Engineering, Artificial Intelligence and Mathematics' (STREAM) model of education, research and development. Such an agency will also be empowered to provide standardized accreditation to students from vocational educational diplomas to PhDs, enabling them to work anywhere in the RESTO member state periphery. Over time, such a system of education would bring all states on the same level of literacy, research and science and technology enabling their industrialization at a much faster rate.

The students in all member states will be taught humanities subjects, including optional national language courses from all member states, enabling greater integration and cultural links in the long term. RESTO will also be required to set up high-tech research and development facilities to facilitate science and technology growth in the region, including a joint space research agency to enable the development of "above-the-horizon technologies," which would also have a great commercial use in the industrial market. The space program would also cut costs for all regional states, which are having unsuccessful domestic space programs.

This model would ensure that the region remains competitive in all domains of science and technology, and progress to become the creators of technology.



## FORECAST

We firmly believe that if ECO transforms into RESTO; it will lead to the following developments in the region.

- The RESTO region would realize its true socio-economic potential through fully enabled, free preferential trade across the region with full spectrum geographic integration connecting land-locked member states to Pakistani, Iranian and Turkish ports.
- Greater prosperity would result in the increased national power and stature of the member states, providing better positioning to navigate the treacherous seas of global geopolitics.
- RESTO will enable the region to become a geopolitical giant with an ability to assert its geopolitical, economic and diplomatic impact across the region and the globe.
- Turkey would emerge as the de-facto leader of such an alliance due to its economic size, providing an incentive to stop its futile efforts to join the European Union.
- Member states would enjoy a greater level of credible and dependable security from indirect foreign aggression of terrorism, direct foreign aggression, cyber warfare, the threat of a nuclear attack and ballistic missiles.
- RESTO will strive to protect the food and energy security of its member states. RESTO will increase the level of sovereignty for its members, by creating parallel systems to bypass the restrictive western regimes like MTCR, civil nuclear fuel, and other important technology transfers in a transparent and legal manner.
- RESTO will fight for its members on major international forums like the UN, EU and the United States to aggressively project its interests and objectives for great mutual benefit of the member states.
- RESTO will create a deterrent to defend its members from the 'collective punishment,' also known as the international sanctions, used by the western states.
- RESTO would pave the way for an integrated market economy, single trading currency, rating agency, banking, finance and stock exchange infrastructure for greater economic integration to turn the region into a global economic power.
- The STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Artificial-Intelligence and Mathematics) research and development will flourish because the costs of R&D will be divided between the member states and developing a huge commercial market to buy the products created by the RESTO based companies.
- Graduates from RESTO member states will enjoy a market economy to find suitable employment. Businessmen will find more stable and profit-generating opportunities to invest and entrepreneurs will find new avenues to create jobs and opportunities.
- RESTO will decrease dependence on foreign suppliers of technology, food, arms and other goods by prioritizing locally produced solutions, therefore bolstering industrialization of the member states.
- RESTO will ensure the economic and security well-being of its member Muslim states which desire better opportunities, integration and credible defense.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shahid Raza serves as the Director of the Geopolitical Research at **CommandEleven**. He brings to the team a set of sophisticated analysis and forecasting capabilities of geopolitical dynamics and trends from around the world. His area of expertise is the analysis of hybrid warfare strategies involving Pakistan, India, China, Russia, Central and South Asia, North America and the Middle East. He brings to our team his strong grip on military grade conventional and nuclear weapon systems, their employment doctrines in both conventional and asymmetrical warfare operations and their impacts on the strategic stability & balance of power of a given region and the World. As our Director General of Operations, he brings a unique blend of applied, analytical and research team management capabilities to the organization which prove critical for delivering the most cutting-edge situational awareness, analysis and policy recommendations for our most valued customers.

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